

T. 628

✓
THE

S P E E C H

OF

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Esq.

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

(8th December 1802)

ON THE MOTION FOR

THE ARMY ESTABLISHMENT

FOR THE ENSUING YEAR.



London :

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY:

—
1802.

Price Sixpence,

Or per Hundred, One Guinea and a Half.

ART

THE

TO

THE

ART

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

T. Gillet, Printer, Salisbury-Square.

THE

Speech of R. B. Sheridan Esq. in
the House of Commons on the Army
Establishment 1802.

Speech intended to have been made
in the House of Lords by Bp of Landaff
Novbr 1803. _____

Thoughts on the formation of the
late & present Administrations
by Lord Archibald Hamilton.

Thoughts on the present Administration
by an Abol Whig — James Mason Esq.

St Stephen's Chapel by Horatio
R. Letter to the worthy & Independent
Electors of Shrewsbury by J. Mason Esq.

THE
S P E E C H

OF

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Esq.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

8th December, 1802.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, and delivered one of the most elegant, argumentative, vigorous, and impressive speeches ever heard within the walls of Parliament. It was to the following effect :—“ Sir, being in the situation alluded to by the right hon. Gentleman who has just sat down, of not being able to agree precisely with any of those who have preceded me, yet of being, at the same time, unwilling to give a silent vote on the present occasion, I rise with some sentiments of reluctance. There is one thing, however, in which we all coincide ; it is, that the crisis in which we are placed, is so big with tremendous importance, so pregnant with mighty difficulties, so full of apprehensions and dangers, that the House and the country have a right to know what are the intentions and the views of those by whose exertions we may expect to be extricated from the complication of embarrassments, and snatched from the very brink of destruction. Sir, one of the circumstances I most regret in this debate is, the references that have been made to the characters and abilities of persons supposed to be fit to fill particular offices. I feel this as a subject of regret,

A 2

and

and feeling so, I am sorry that my hon. Friend near me made any allusion even to one man, whom of all men upon earth I most love and respect, because I do view the crisis to be one of such moment and peril, and because, if ever there was a time in which we should prove to the people of England that we are above all party feelings, that we are above all party distinctions, that we are superior to any petty scramble for places and power, that time is the present.—

Sir, in speaking upon these topics, I do find a disposition in some gentlemen to rebuke any man who shall deliver any opinion with respect to the First Consul of France. One hon. Gentleman, who rebuked an hon. General that spoke before him, declared that he would not give his opinion with respect to the conduct of France to Switzerland; and what does his rebuke amount to? He confesses that upon that subject there can be but one opinion. Why then, Sir, he either adopts the opinion of the hon. General or not. If he does adopt it, he gives as strong an opinion against the conduct of France as can possibly be given. If he does not adopt it, why then all we can say is, that there are two opinions. But what, he asks, has Switzerland to do with the question? It has this to do with it. The hon. General introduced the subject in this way; he contends that a power which is capable of such unprovoked aggression, and such perfidy, is the power that ought to be watched. But the hon. Gentleman goes on to assert, that we have nothing to do with the case of Switzerland, nothing to do with France, nothing but with her power:—Nothing but her power!—as if that were little. He asks too where is the great difference between France under the Bourbons and under her present ruler? Wy, Sir, the hon. General inferred, from the conduct of France, that with her growing power she had a growing disposition to mischief. But is that power, demands the hon. Gentleman, greater now than it was last

June? Perhaps it is not, Sir. But her mischievous disposition is greater; and if I am asked to bring a proof of the truth of my assertion, I must bring the case of Switzerland. Sir, if I see a purposed contempt of the independence of a nation; if I see a perfidious disregard of the faith of treaties; if I see power withdraw her assistance, only to return and entrap a country of freemen with greater certainty; why then I say there has been a change, and a great change too, and that such a power we have a right to watch. But, says the hon. Gentleman, we have no right to make use of invectives against the First Consul of France. I will abstain if I can; I say if I can, because I feel that even a simple narrative may be construed into invective. With regard to the general question of a disposition to peace or war, I for one declare, that I am as strongly and as sincerely for the preservation of peace as any man, and that I do not consider war as any remedy for the evils complained of. If a war spirit be springing up in this country, if a chivalrous disposition be observable, if a sentiment of indignation be rising upon the subject of the treatment of Switzerland, I for one shall contend that the treatment of Switzerland is no cause of war. I would therefore say, preserve peace if possible: peace if possible; because the effects of war, always calamitous, may be calamitous indeed, buckling, as we should be forced to do, all our sinews and strength to that power in a contest with her upon such grounds. I repeat, therefore, peace if possible; but I add, resistance, prompt, resolute, determined resistance to the first aggression, be the consequences what they may. Influenced by these sentiments, I shall vote cordially and cheerfully for this large peace establishment; and it is because I shall vote for it that I think myself bound to state my reasons. Sir, some gentlemen seem to consider what they advance as so many axioms too clear to need explanation or to require defence. But when I vote so large an establishment, I think myself

not at liberty to bind such a burthen upon my constituents, without stating the grounds upon which I act, and the principles by which I am prompted. Sir, I have listened with all the attention I am master of to the different arguments that have been advanced in the present debate. One hon. Gentleman who spoke second, appears to be a decided enemy to a great establishment, and the reasons he gave for his opposition, I confess, perfectly astonished me. Luckily he has no rapid flippancy in his manner; his sentiments are delivered too soberly and sedately to be mistaken. I am sure I mean nothing disrespectful to that gentleman, who amply repays the attention that is paid to him. But he says, if Ministers had only said to him that danger existed, he would for one have voted for the force proposed. Does he doubt the danger? He complains that his Majesty's Ministers do not state it precisely. But does he pretend that he does not see and feel it? Can any one look at the map of Europe and be blind to it? Can any one have a heart to resist apprehended injury, and say that we ought not to be prepared? But he asks, why raise only 110,000 men? You can never equal the military power of France, and as you cannot, why stop at 110,000? Why not raise 120, 130, 140,000? If this argument be worth any thing, it applies equally to our raising only 1000. Why, if we can never be equal to France, raise a man? Another Gentleman, who spoke last, has alluded to alliances, and I agree perfectly with him in what he advanced against making any pledges. He has alluded to the fate of the pledges made in the war of the succession, in the war of 1741; but if he meant to be impartial; he need not have gone back so far; he need not have travelled beyond the last war; he might have mentioned the pledges then given; he might have recollected the pledge of never giving up the Netherlands; he might have recalled to our minds the pledge of obtaining indemnity for
the

the past, and security for the future ; he might have dwelt upon the pledge of exhausting the last drop of our blood in the contest for religion, order, and civilized society, the *toto certatum corpore regni* ; he might have reminded us of all these pledges made, and of all of them having been abandoned. He confesses his warmth of friendship for the late Minister, and he certainly never shewed it more than in stopping so short with his historical narrative of pledges. The next excellent reasoning of the hon. Gentleman who spoke second against the proposed vote is, that the first year of war there will be an immense army drawn upon the opposite coast, and therefore, now it is not necessary to be prepared. When the army is upon your shores, when the trumpet of the enemy sounds at your gates, then it is time to be prepared. Appearance of security, he contends, gives, often, the effect of security. If we have large armies, France will think we raise them through fear ; if we do not have them, she will think that we feel ourselves perfectly secure. I have heard instances, Sir, where mounting wooden guns upon a fort has produced the same security as if there had been real ones. But unluckily in this instance for us, by our constitutional form of proceeding, our whole force must be known : we cannot pass upon an enemy wooden guns, and an army at Brentford. If we vote no force, an enemy will know we have none. But have no arms, throw away your guns, is the advice of the hon. Gentleman. Sir, when every house in my neighbourhood has been attacked and robbed by a gang of ruffians, how my having no arms is to save me from a visit from them, I must leave the hon. Gentleman to explain. His next argument is, that it is unreasonable in us to believe that Bonaparte wishes to be at war with us ; for he thinks the French have nothing to gain by invasion. Nothing to gain ? What else have they to lose but that of which it has been said they have so much to spare, and what have they

they not to gain? Sir, I cannot but think this as unbecoming a sentiment as ever was uttered. But it is unreasonable to think that the French wish to meddle with us. Why, I protest I cannot explain. If, as has been said, they have felt our arms, they who have been every where else successful, cannot but view the only power whose arms they have felt with feelings of warm resentment, and with sentiments of mortified pride. But look at the map of Europe; there, where a great man (who, however, was always wrong on this subject) said, he looked for France, and found nothing but a chasm. Look at that map now, and see nothing but France. It is in our power to measure her territory, to reckon her population, but it is scarcely within the grasp of any man's mind to measure the ambition of Bonaparte. Why, when all Europe bows down before him—why, when he has subdued the whole continent, he should feel such great respect for us, I am at a loss to discover. If then it be true, as I have stated, that his ambition is of that immeasurable nature, there are abundant and obvious reasons why it must be progressive—reasons much stronger than any that could have been used under the power of the Bourbons. They were ambitious, but it was not so necessary for them to feed their subjects with the spoils and plunder of war; they had the attachment of a long established family applied to them; they had the effect and advantage of hereditary succession. But I see in the very situation and composition of the power of Bonaparte a physical necessity for him to go on in this barter with his subjects, and to promise to make them the masters of the world if they will consent to be his slaves. I see then, I repeat, this strong reason for his pursuing this system of policy. If that be the case, must not his most anxious looks be directed to Great Britain? Every thing else is petty and contemptible compared with it. Russia, if not in his power, is at least in his influence—Prussia is at his beck—

Italy

Italy is his vassal—Holland is in his grasp—Spain at his nod—Turkey in his toils—Portugal at his foot ;—when I see this, can I hesitate in stating my feelings, still less can I hesitate in giving a vote that shall put us upon our guard against the machinations and workings of such an ambition? But it has been said, that it is possible he may mean nothing more than rivalry of commerce. Happy, Sir, shall I be if such an idea enter into his head at all, much more if it form part of his plans. But I confess I cannot see that it does. I mark him taking positions calculated to destroy our commerce, but I do not find him doing any thing for the mutual benefit of the trade of the two countries. I see him anxious to take possession of Louisiana, and to use the ports of St. Domingo to carry out West India and Jamaica trade. I can conceive a possible case, in which such positions might be taken as to force us to surrender our commerce without a stroke. An ignorant observer may see two armies, and may say there is no war, because there is no battle ; yet one of them may make such movements as to compel the other to surrender without striking a blow.

Of the commercial talents of Bonaparte, I can be supposed to know but little ; but bred in camps, it cannot be imagined that his commercial knowledge can be very great ; and, indeed, if I am rightly informed, he is proceeding in the old plan of heavy duties and prohibitions. But he would go a shorter way to work with us. The old country has credit and capital, and commercial enterprise ; and he may think, if he can subjugate us, that he can carry them off to France like so many busts and marbles. But he would find himself mistaken ; that credit would wither under the gripe of power ; that capital would sink into the earth, if trodden upon by the foot of a despot. That commercial enterprise would, I believe, lose all its vigour in the presence of an arbitrary government. No, Sir, instead of putting his

nation apprentice to commerce, he has other ideas in his head. My humble apprehension is, that, though in the tablet and volume of his mind there may be some marginal note about cashiering the King of Etruria; yet, that the whole text is occupied with the destruction of this country. This is the first vision that breaks upon him through the gleam of the morning; this is his last prayer at night, to whatever Deity he addresses it, whether to Jupiter, or to Mahomet; to the Goddesses of Battles, or to the Goddesses of Reason. But, Sir, the only consolation is, that he is a great philosopher and philanthropist. I believe this hyper-philanthropy has done more harm than ever it did good. He has discovered that we all belong to the Western family. Sir, I confess I feel a sentiment of deep indignation, when I hear (I take it from report) that this scrap of nonsense was uttered to one of the most enlightened of the human race. To this family party I do not wish to belong. He may invite persons, if he please, to dinner, and, like Lord Peter, say, that this tough crust is excellent mutton. He may toss a sceptre to the King of Etruria to play with, and keep a rod to scourge him in the corner; he may have thought at first his Cisalpine Republic a fine growing child, and may have found it a ricketty bantling; but I feel contempt for all this mockery. Let us, Sir, abstain from invective, only let us speak the truth. Why, Sir, what I have said is nothing but the truth. Let us be visiting acquaintances, but I do implore him not to consider us as one of the family. Perhaps, Sir, it is unnecessary for me to state any more reasons for voting for this large peace establishment. All I desire is, not to have it understood that in stating my fears, I speak from a well informed judgment. On that account it is that I say do not go to war; on that account it is that I state my apprehensions as rational grounds for great vigilance, and for strong preparation. Sir, there are

two other points pressed by several Gentlemen, to which I beg leave to refer. I mean the fitness of the persons in power, and the spirit of the people. The power of the country consists in its army, its navy, and its finance, in the talent and integrity of its ministers, and, above all, in the spirit of the people. Upon this second branch of the question, though I have said some things which may be considered as grateful to that party which may be denominated the war party, yet I fear I shall be compelled to state by and by some circumstances that may not be quite so agreeable to them. It is a matter of no importance to the House perhaps to know why I was absent on the two first days of the session. I am anxious to hear the part which men would take, and I do confess I never felt so much disgust at any circumstance, as to find on the first day of the session, instead of an unanimous vote for vigilance and preparation, a call from some to give us back our places. The noble Lord's friends may be divided into two classes; those who call for a change of Ministers, and for war. And here I must say, Sir, for one, that I thank them for their frankness in stating what they have done, because their frankness is an antidote to the fury of their counsels. The noble Lord says, we don't want to go to war; we only wish to have other persons in power; the noble Lord deals with the ingenuousness of youth, as I say; with the inexperience of youth, according to others. But what should we get by this change? Would those persons he recommends have acted differently from the present Ministers? Would they have gone to war for any of the events that have occurred since the peace? Would they have gone to war for the annexing of Piedmont to France? for the Cisalpine Republic? for the invasion of Switzerland? No, for none of these. They would have done as Ministers have done, but more vigorously; they would have shewn more grumbling patience;

they would have made wry faces ; they would not have stood with their hands before them ; no, but with their arms akimbo. What would they have got by this ? Would they have obtained any thing more by all this grudging and winning ? Would such a mode of conduct have become the character and dignity of the country ? Sir, it is not to be inferred, because the right hon. Gentleman opposite me did none of these things, that he felt no indignation. I learn from his Majesty's speech, every word of which I approve, that his Ministers are determined not to be shut out of the continent. I say, Sir, I approve of the speech, because it satisfied me that a sense of wrong, and a resentment of injury, may live under moderate language. But these Ministers, it seems, are the incapable Gentlemen. Will Gentlemen shew us any act of base submission on their part ? If they can ; if they prove that they did any act with respect to Switzerland, and meanly retracted it afterwards, I will be the first to inveigh against them. But these Gentlemen shew us no such acts ; they seem as if they considered the Ministers, now the drudgery of signing the peace is done, as *functi officiis*, and as if they ought to go out ; as if one was a mere goose quill, and the other a stick of sealing wax, which are done with, and ought to be thrown under the table. We know that *Touchstone* says, as a good ground of quarrel, " That he don't like the cut of a certain courtier's beard."

Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare,

Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te !

The English parody may be more applicable to these Gentlemen :

I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,

The reason why I cannot tell ;

But this, I'm sure, I know full well,

I do not like like thee, Dr. Fell.

It is fair, Sir, to say, that this English parody, so unfavourable to the Doctor, proceeds from the mouth of a fair lady, who has privileges to like and dislike, which would ill become a member of this House. Sir, I contend that no solid reason has been offered to be urged against these Ministers. How, I would ask, has the right hon. Gentleman forfeited the confidence of the people? And why are we told that there is but one man alone that can save the country. But it seems, and I must frankly confess that I was utterly astonished when I heard such an assertion made use of, that his Majesty's Ministers assumed the reins of Government at a most inviting period. Sir, I defy any man to shew me a period of greater difficulty. The right hon. Gentleman who, in the chair of this House, had so amply deserved and secured the respect of every member in it, could not but have quitted it with feelings of regret.—But the expeditions to the Baltic and to Egypt were prepared: true; yet was success certain? Was it not the act of chance, and the great skill shewn by the noble Admiral (Nelson) that brought the expedition to the Baltic to a favourable issue? Did the late Ministers conceal their fears with respect to the expedition to Egypt? That it was most glorious in its event, and that the country ought to bind the brows of the meanest soldier engaged in it with laurels, I am ready to allow. But it cannot be denied, that, after the expedition had been off the coast in Italy, and was in Marmorice Bay, orders were sent to stop the expedition altogether. With respect to the negotiations for peace, their predecessors knew that the present Ministers would have to deal with men who, it might be supposed, would be glad of an occasion to retort the insolence of Lord Grenville's letter. If the enemy had parodied that letter as their only answer to us, if they had said we will wait for experience and the evidence of facts, with respect to the new Ministry; if they had said, restore that old

whig.

whig constitution which the former Ministers have so impaired, we might have thought such conduct trifling, and beneath them ; but we could not have questioned its fairness. Sir, though his Majesty's Ministers must have been prepared to expect humiliation ; yet they made peace, I will venture to say, on terms comparatively more advantageous to the country than those that were offered at Lisle. Of these Ministers, Sir, I know also that they have not renewed any of their predecessors' oppressive acts. But this, some gentlemen will contend, is a proof of their weakness and unfitness. Never too, Sir, did the Treasury interfere so little in the General Election. This again may be advanced by some as an instance of their incapacity. Nay, the North was left almost to a member of the late Administration. When, therefore, gentlemen talk in future of Mr. Pitt's being the fittest person to save the country, they ought to add also the name of Mr. Dundas. But what did these gentlemen expect from the present Chancellor of the Exchequer ? We treated him, when in the chair of this House, with the respect he merited. He has, I believe, Sir, over our present worthy Speaker, the advantage in attitude ; but did they expect that when he was Minister he was to stand up and call Europe to order ? Was he to send Mr. Coleman, the Serjeant at Arms, to the Baltic, and order the Northern Powers to the bar of the House ? Was he to see the Powers of Germany scrambling like members over the benches, and say, Gentlemen must take their places ? Was he expected to cast his eye to Italy, and exclaim, that strangers must withdraw ? Was he to stand across the Rhine, and say, the Germans to the right, and the French to the left ? If he could have done all these things, I for one should always vote, that the Speaker of the House should be appointed the Minister of the country. But the right hon. Gentleman has done all that a reasonable man could expect him to do. Sir, I confess, I wish to

know

know what Mr. Pitt himself thinks. I should be glad to hear what his sentiments are of the call made for him, and loudly made too, in another place by a vigorous Statesman. I well remember, Sir, and so do we all, the character he gave of the present Administration. The justice of his character of the First Lord of the Admiralty no man can question. Of the accuracy of his judgment with respect to the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, it does not become us to entertain a doubt. The noble Secretary of State was better qualified for the situation than any man in the country, with an exception made, I believe, in favour of my hon. Friend near me (Mr. Fox). Does Mr. Pitt mean to retract that character? I cannot suppose he does. I must believe that he left, in his judgment, the best administration that could be left. I have heard some gentlemen attach to the present Ministry the appellation of a mawkish mixture; but if I were to compare them to any thing, I should say, that Mr. Pitt, and the Ex-Secretary of War, acted as men fond of wine (which I certainly do not mean to impute to them as a fault), and drinking a bottle of Tokay. Though you may take what appears to be the best, and leave only what seems to be the lees, yet if you only pour a bottle of good white wine upon them, you have as good a bottle of Tokay as ever. Sir, I think the mixture as good and as wholesome to the constitution as it could have been. I am sure I hear with joy that it is not on account of ill health that the right hon. Gentleman to whom I have alluded is absent. I repeat, Sir, when I see so many persons anxious about that gentleman, I am glad to hear that his health is re-established. But how, I would ask, can we, with any consistency, turn out the man who made the peace, to bring in the person who avowed his approbation of it? Sir, it is since that peace was made that gentlemen have voted a statue to Mr. Pitt; but whenever they erect that statue, let them

cover

cover it with laurels so as not to shew its nose ; yet still a piece of the olive must go with it, for he approved and supported the peace. Sir, I cannot persuade myself to think he is playing a double game, or that he has retracted the opinion he delivered in this House ; but every thing should stand plain, every thing should be explicit. I have heard of one person playing two different games at chess, for two different persons at the same time ; but I never heard of a person playing one of his hands against the other. I suspect, therefore, there has been some mistake in the telegraphic communication ; that the political Philidor's game has been misunderstood ; that his friends have displaced a knight and a castle, when they should only have taken two pawns ; that they have made an attempt to checkmate the King, when they had no instructions for doing it. Sir, I cannot forget the period when the august personage of the Sovereign was held up as the only man who was against extending privileges to the Catholics in Ireland ; and I cannot, therefore, brook the idea of calling that right hon. Gentleman back to power, and forcing him upon the crown. I expected when I came into this House to hear much said against Bonaparte, but I had not the slightest expectation of hearing any thing against the prerogative of the Crown. Mr. Pitt the only man to save the country ! No single man can save the country. If a nation depends only upon one man, it cannot, and, I will add, it does not deserve to be saved ; it can only be done by the Parliament and the people. Sir, I say, therefore, I cannot believe that there is a back and a fore door to this Egerian grotto. We have all heard, I dare say, of a classical exhibition in this town, *The Invisible Girl*. Here, however, I hope we shall have no whisperings backwards and forwards, no speaking through tubes, no invisible agency. I hope too, that we shall have it declared, as it ought to be, that these opinions, which have been rumoured about, are unfounded.

I shall

I shall now address a few words to those gentlemen who would hurry us into war ; and here, Sir, I must say, that of all persons living, the Ex-Secretary of War is the last man who can consistently call out for war. He despised the warning voice of my hon. Friend, he turned a deaf ear to his predictions that we should only consolidate and strengthen the power of France. His answers always were as if he should despise the power of France, could he but see Jacobinism destroyed. Is it not destroyed ?

“ Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear ;
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcanian tiger—
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble—”

The right hon. Gentleman's wishes are gratified ; Jacobinism is killed and gone, and by whom ? By him who can no longer be called the Child and Champion of Jacobinism—by Bonaparte. I remember to have heard Jacobinism compared to Antæus, who gained strength at every throw : but Bonaparte proceeded like Hercules ; he gave it a true fraternal hug, and strangled it. Did the French annex Piedmont, did they enter Switzerland with the Rights of Man ? Did they talk of those rights when Bonaparte told the people of Italy they were a set of dolts and drivellers, and were unfit to govern themselves ? But now the right hon. Gentleman seems in a greater fright than ever. He seems as if he had rather have the old ghost back again. Most whimsically he wants to unite all parties against France—

Black spirits and white,
Blue spirits and grey,

all are welcome to him. The moderate Jacobins he takes to his bosom ; they were only misled by their feelings. The violent Jacobins he appeals to as men of proud spirits. He wishes to sing *Ca Ira* to them, and to head them all. Oh !

had I, he sighs, but plenty of Jacobins here! But on what principle would they carry on the war? If they were able to curtail the power of Bonaparte, would not their views increase, and would they ever stop without making an example of the regicide Republic? If they will speak out fairly, will they not confess this? Will the country, then, for such a purpose consent to turn out the present Ministers? Sir, upon the spirit of the country I wish to say a few words. I have heard from one noble Lord, with regret, what I hope was but a slip, that the spirit of the country is worn out. I think that noble Lord must retract that idea. Sir, I certainly looked to the rejoicings at the peace as an unmanly and irrational exultation. Do I rebuke the people for rejoicing at the blessings of peace? No, Sir, but for rejoicing without asking about the terms. Did they rejoice that we had gained Trinidad and Ceylon? Would two farthing candles have been burnt less had we not obtained them? No, Sir, if they had believed that they had been fighting for civilized order, morality, and religion; and if, believing this, they exulted in such a peace, then it proves, that their spirit was worn out. But I allude to this, in order that the enemy may not be led into a mistake upon the subject. Sir, one of the disadvantages attending the present Administration is, that they will not turn, when they are attacked by the last Administration. They are hampered by the votes they gave for the war. But from the period of the allegations that it was a war for the Scheldt, I assert that it continued to be a war upon false pretences. The people were told that it was a war for religion and good order, and they found that peace was ready to be made at Lisle, without any reference to those causes. The right hon. Gentleman says, what baseness, what meanness, while religion was in their mouths, to consent to steal a sugar island. It is true, Sir, though it comes a little extraordinarily from that man who was one of the Cabinet

bmet Ministers at the time of the negociation at Lisle. It should appear as if there had indeed been great discord in the Cabinet; there never was greater, says the hon. Gentleman. They acted not merely like men in a boat, rowing different ways, but like men in the boat of a balloon. Up the Ex-Secretary of War was ascending to the clouds, whilst Mr. Dundas was opening the valve and letting out the gas to descend; while one was throwing out ballast to mount to the most chivalrous heights, the other was attempting to let drop an anchor upon a West India Island. Each of these Ministers was suffered to have his favourite plan. The Ex-Secretary at War was allowed to nibble at the Court of France, the War Secretary of State to make a descent upon a sugar island; and thus they went on till the letter from Lord Grenville, that letter never to be forgotten, and I will add, never to be forgiven, made its appearance, and the people took a deep and settled disgust. Why did this not appear? And this, Sir, ought to be a lesson to us. The mouths of the people were shut and gagged, and the Government were acting without knowing any thing of their circumstances. Sir, in such circumstances, the integrity of their minds was disgusted, and they were glad to get rid of the war at any rate. Upon this subject I have dwelt the more particularly, because I wish Bonaparte not to mistake the cause of the joy of the people. He should know, that if he commits any act of aggression against them, they are ready to enter singly into the contest, rather than suffer any attack upon their honour and their independence. I shall proceed no further. I perfectly agree with my hon. Friend, that war ought to be avoided, though he does not agree with me on the means best calculated to produce that effect. From any opinion he may express, I never differ but with the greatest reluctance. For him my affection, my esteem, and my attachment are unbounded, and they will end only with my life. But I think an im-

portan

portant lesson is to be learnt from the arrogance of Bonaparte. He says he is an instrument in the hands of Providence, an Envoy of God: He says he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to restore Switzerland to happiness, and to elevate Italy to splendor and importance. Sir, I think he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to make the English love their constitution the better; to cling to it with more fondness; to hang round it with truer tenderneſs. Every man feels when he returns from France that he is coming from a dungeon to enjoy the light and life of British independence. Sir, whatever abuses exist, we ſhall ſtill look with pride and pleaſure upon the ſubſtantial bleſſings we ſtill enjoy. I believe too, Sir, that he is an instrument in the hands of Providence, to make us more liberal in our political differences, and to render us determined with one hand and heart to oppoſe any aggreſſions that may be made upon us. If that aggreſſion be made, my hon. Friend will, I am ſure, agree with me, that we ought to meet it with a ſpirit worthy of theſe Iſlands; that we ought to meet it with a conviction of the truth of this aſſertion, that the country which has achieved ſuch greatneſs, has no retreat in littleneſs; that if we could be content to abandon every thing, we ſhould find no ſafety in poverty, no ſecurity in abject ſubmiſſion: finally, Sir, that we ought to meet it with a fixed determination to periſh in the ſame grave with the honour and independence of the country."

(Mr. Sheridan ſpoke an hour and a quarter; it is impoſſible for us to attempt to deſcribe the effect which his ſpeech produced upon the Houſe.)